Family Readiness Groups

(FRG 101)

Aug 06

SESSION OBJECTIVE

Oriented for spouses “new” to the military or for those who may have not had recent contact with FRGs

- Definitions
- Structure
- Responsibilities
- Funds
- OPERATION READY
- Resources

CHALLENGES OF TODAY's ARMY AND THE FAMILY

- Changing Demographics
- Off-Post Populations
- Nature of Deployments – Simultaneous Operations
- Rising Expectations

DEFINITIONS

FAMILY READINESS GROUPS

* “An officially command-sponsored organization of family members, volunteers and soldiers belonging to a unit, that together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communications among family members, the chain of command and community resources.”

* One major goal of the FRG is to help family members feel that they are an integral part of the Army family.

Source: OPERATION READY

FRG Mission

- *Act as an extension of the unit, providing official, accurate command information.*
- *Provide mutual support between the command and the FRG membership.*
- *Advocate more efficient use of available community resources.*
- *Help families solve problems at the lowest level.*

AR 608-1, Appendix J dated 21 July 2006

FRG Factors

- *Commander's budget for FRG activities*
- *The needs of Soldiers, civilian employees, and their families*
- *Command interest and emphasis*
- *The number of FRG members*
- *The time, energy, and creativity of FRG membership*
- *The makeup of the FRG, including the percentages of single Soldiers, number of years Soldiers and their families have served with the military, number of families with young children, and other family composition factors*
- *The unit's training and deployment schedule*

AR 608-1

FRG MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to unit family members (immediate and extended to include mothers, fathers, aunts, etc.), as well as others interested in the welfare of the soldiers (community members, retirees)

- Because membership is voluntary, consider the following and encourage participation:
  - Survey soldiers and family members to determine their needs and interests
  - Welcome and communicate with newcomers soon after their arrival
  - Provide child care during meetings
  - Ensure FRGs provides timely and accurate information, especially during deployments

FRG

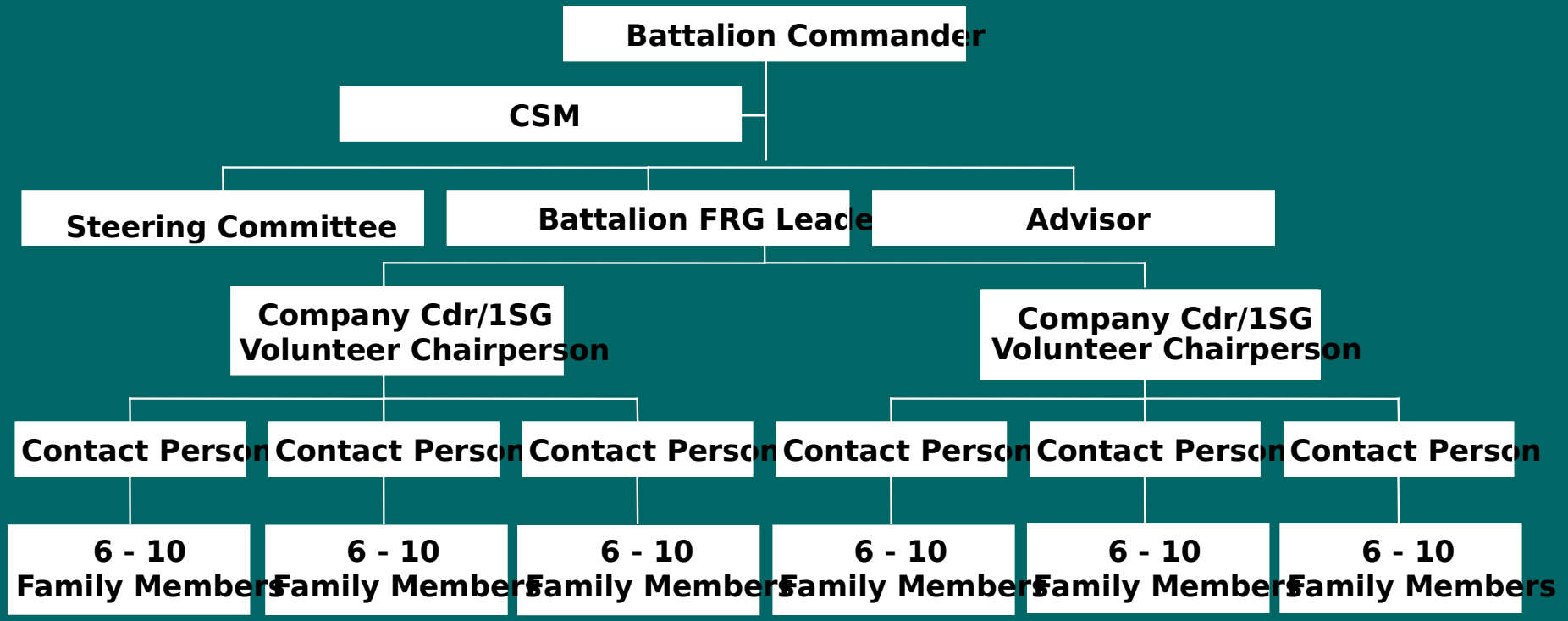
- Family Readiness is a Commander's responsibility (AR 600-20)
- Official command sponsored organization
- Network between the chain of command, family members, and resources:
  - Information
  - Foster competent, knowledgeable, and resilient families
  - Mutual support
  - Advocate efficient use of community resources
  - Promote soldier and family readiness
  - Contribute to the well-being of the unit

STRUCTURE

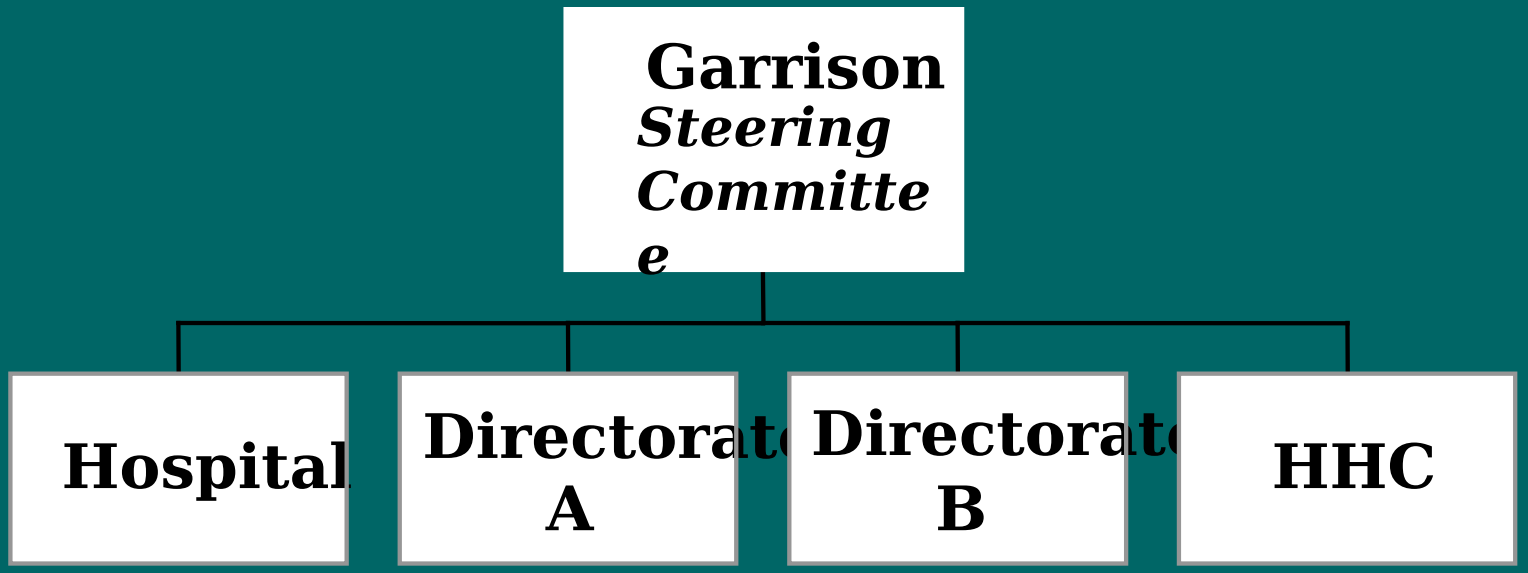
FRG STRUCTURE

- Structure should be tailored to the unit, its mission, and demographics of the family members
- Agencies that can help establish an FRG include
  - Other units or organizations with FRGs
  - ACS, RC Family Program Coordinators
  - Unit staff, Chaplain
  - Installation Volunteer Coordinator
- Types of Structures
  - Battalion
  - Garrison
  - Reserve Component

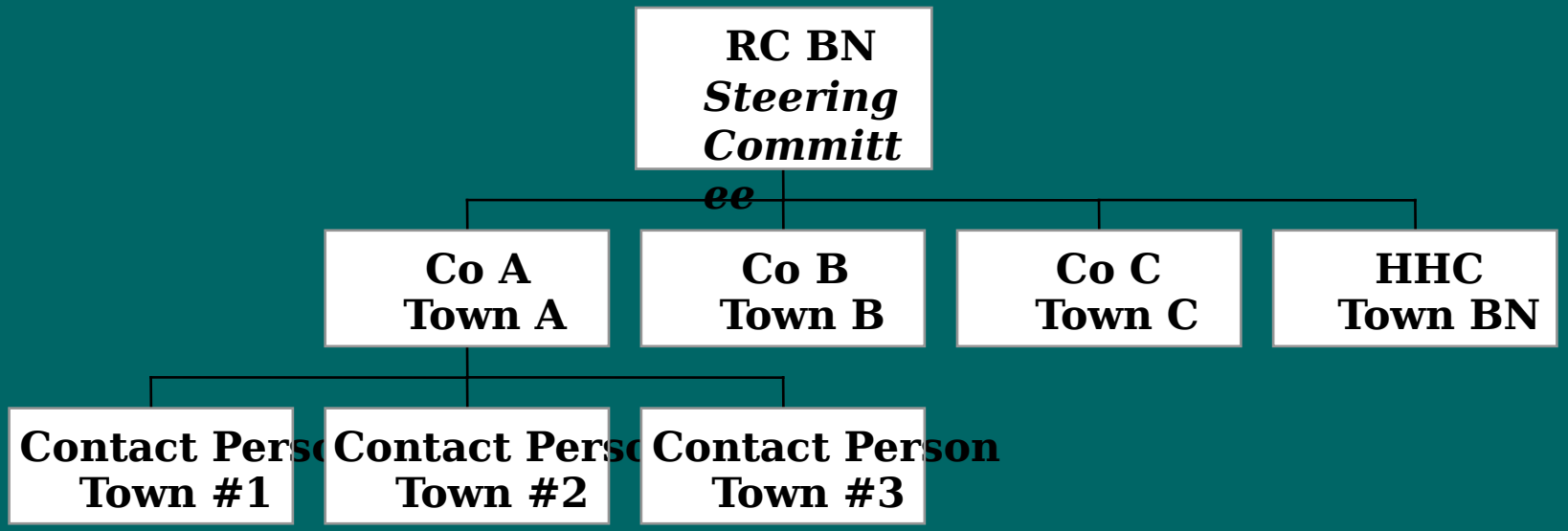
Family Readiness Group Model Battalion



Family Readiness Group Model Garrison



Family Readiness Group Model
Reserve Component



TYPICAL STEERING COMMITTEE BN/BDE

- Commander
- CSM
- Rear Detachment Commander
- Senior Spouse Advisor(s)
- Family Readiness Group Leader(s)
- Chaplain
- Member of Staff
- Company Commander/1SG
- Volunteer Chairperson
- Single Soldiers

RESPONSIBILITIES

Steering Committee Responsibilities

- Oversees and supports FRG activities in the command
- Provides assistance to FRG leaders at all levels
- Coordinates with “higher” HQS on policies and issues
- Provide guidance, information, and support
- Provide a link between the unit and the community

Rear Detachment Commander Responsibilities

- Serves as unit commander during deployment
- Helps resolve family readiness problems OR refers them to the appropriate agency
- Maintains regular contact with the deployed unit
- Is the link between the FRG and military resources
- The point of contact for official actions

Senior Spouse Advisor (s)

- Information conduit between the command, FRGs, and families
- Helps identify common issues or concerns
- Promotes & supports volunteers
- Participates & offers assistance as needed or requested
- Serves on the BN/BDE Steering Committee

Family Readiness Group Leader (s) Responsibilities

The leader can be any family member in the unit whom the Commander has appointed and endorsed

- Become knowledgeable of unit mission, FRG operating procedures, structure, community resources
- Organize unit-level support groups
- Track and record volunteer hours
- Prepare and maintain telephone tree
- Call the key contact person to activate the telephone tree
- Attend and chair FRG meetings
- Communicate with the Commander and unit POC
- Coordinate with community resources to provide training for FRG members
- Provide job descriptions for volunteers
- Recruit and train volunteers
- Insure communication is maintained among the members

VOLUNTEERS

- Advisor
- Chairperson/Key Volunteer
- Newsletter Editor
- Treasurer
- Contact Persons
- Child Care Coordinator
- Refreshment Coordinator
- Hospitality Coordinator

Family Readiness Group Deployment Support Assistants/Mobilization Deployment Assistants

- *Coordinates training and provide administrative collaboration between the rear detachment commander and the FRG leader. The deployment assistant will not duplicate services or overlap with existing resources.*

- *Works for the commander.*

- *Is not involved with FRG informal fundraising activities, casualty assistance procedures, family counseling…*

NEWSLETTERS

- *SOP outlining preparation, printing, and distribution of FRG newsletter.*
- *FRG newsletter states whether it contains only official or both official and unofficial information.*
- *When the newsletter contains both "The inclusion of some unofficial information in this FRG newsletter has not increased the costs to the government, in accordance with DoD 4525.8-M, DoD Official Mail Manual."*

Ideas

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- Conduct meetings
- Telephone tree or chain of concern
- Newsletters
- Assistance during trauma
- Figure out what the individuals need from the FRG
  - Challenges of “new” people
  - Resources families need (activities, training, support)
  - What changes during the deployment cycle (pre/during/post) that affect the soldier and/or family members?

IDEAS…

- Videotapes of soldiers/families
- Routine telephone calls
- Unit Website
- Newsletters
- Volunteer recognition
- Job descriptions
- Volunteer training
- Social activities
- 1-800 phone numbers to unit Rear-Detachment
- Include extended family members in the FRG

FUNDS

FUNDS

Appropriated and Nonappropriated Funds

- Training and travel *of official statutory volunteers*
- Reimbursement of incidental expenses
- *Awards, recognition, and mementos. Appropriated funds will not be authorized … for volunteer awards other than official certificates of recognition or volunteer incentive awards in accordance with AR 672-20*

FRG Generated Funds

- Must support group goals
- Non-interest bearing account
- Maintain accountability of incoming and outgoing dollars
- *“Commanders may authorize FRGs to maintain informal funds. Informal funds are limited to expenses consistent with the purpose and function of the fund.*
- *FRGs with an informal fund must have an organizing SOP detailing the FRG mission, activities and procedures.*
- *“Unit Commander must sign a letter designating the fund custodian and an alternate”*

Informal Fund SOP

- *FRG name*
- *Description of the fund purpose/functions and summary of routine activities*
- *Include the statement: "This FRG informal fund is for the benefit of the FRG members only and is established exclusively for charitable purposes and to provide support to Soldiers and family members as Soldiers and families adapt to Army life. It is not a business and is not being run to generate profits. It is not an instrumentality of the United States Government."*
- *SOP approved by the commander and majority of the FRG membership.*
- *Signed (at least) by the FRG leader, fund custodian and alternate fund custodian*

FRG Generated Funds

- *Informal funds cannot be mixed with other funds.*
- *SOP is approved by the unit commander and majority of the FRG members. Signature should include the FRG leader and fund custodian.*
- *Informal funds capped at $5,000.*
- *Garrison commanders may accept unsolicited gifts into the supplemental mission program.*
- *No commercial sponsorship*
- *Internal fundraising only*

RESOURCES

OPERATION R.E.A.D.Y

OPERATION READY

Resources for Educating About Deployment and You

- **The Army Family Readiness Handbook** – revised and updated reference for commanders, leaders, ACS, and unit family readiness personnel in the 21st century
- **The Army Leaders' Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness** – (new) handbook for commanders and other leaders to understand and address family readiness
- **The Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook** – (new) handbook for soldiers and their families to use during deployments. Designed to allow units to personalize it with unit-specific information, local support agencies on and off-post
- **Army FRG Leader's Handbook** – provides an overview of family readiness group, purpose, structure & functions, command & member responsibilities, key leader job descriptions, as well as ideas on building and leading effective FRGs

- **Family Assistance Center** -- Training module focused for those involved with establishing and operation a Family Assistance Center for families of deployed soldiers, survivors of mass casualty events, or victims of natural disasters (supplemented by a video, Family Assistance Center)
- **Predeployment and Ongoing Readiness** -- Training module for "basic" training for families whose soldier is about to be deployed. Lessons include pre-deployment problems & how to avoid them; financial issues; coping with separation; and ideas for how children can cope with an absent parent (supplemented by videos, Practical Readiness—Smart Ways to Minimize Deployment Hassles and Coping with Stress *four sets of age-graded materials for children from preschool to high school ages)
- **Homecoming and Reunion** -- Training module to inform soldiers and families of reunion dynamics and ideas on how to deal with them. (supplemented by a video, Making Your Reunion Work)

FRG Checks…

- Key Volunteer Appointments
- SOP
- Telephone Tree
- Newsletter
- Meetings
- Communication

Initiatives….

- AFTB and USAREC partnership of AFTB Level 1 & II.
- Army Family Team Building (AFTB) training online
- 2nd Bde, 2nd Infantry Division – first to develop and field a web-based Virtual Family Readiness Group (VFRG)
- Virtual FRG (vFRG) – www.armyfrg.org
- MyArmyLifeToo.com – one-stop knowledge center
  - General knowledge component/personal development component/other
- Operation Ready training modules undergoing revision to incorporate new information such as managing trauma.
- Soldier & Family Life Consultant Program – provides counseling services to garrisons, NG, and USAR
- FRG Deployment Support Assistants – brigade level for TOE units
- FRG Leader training
- Rear Detachment Commander training online
- Family Readiness Group Leader Training – www.MyArmyLifeToo.com (Lifelong Learning/e-Learning Center)

Initiatives….

- Army Spouse Employment Partnership – www.MilitarySpouseJobSearch.org
- The Army Casualty Memorial Affairs Operation Center has a new resource for survivors. Families First Casualty Call Center (FFCCC)
  - Open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday
  - 1-866-272-5841
  - Email at FFCCC@hoffman.army.mil
- TRICARE fact sheets – http://www.tricare.osd.mil/factsheets/index.cfm?

New Resources…

- *Our Hero Handbook – Army War College Class of 2006. A guide "walk wounded service members and their families from day 1 through recovery and transition."*
  www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/herohandbook
- *American Legion's Family Support Network*
  1-800-5-4-4098
- *Department of Veteran's Affairs online disabled transition assistance*
  www.vetsuccess.gov
- *Sesame Street DVD packets to help families during deployment*
  www.militaryonesource.com (for children 2-5 years)
- *Guide for Military Children and Deployment – developed by Strategic Outreach for All Reserves this is a guide to help parents, teachers and toher care providing adults*
  www.sofarusa.org

Resources…

- Operation R.E.A.D.Y – *MyArmyLifeToo.com*
  - Job Descriptions
  - Activities
  - The Army Leader's Desk Reference for Soldier/Family Readiness
  - The Soldier/Family Deployment Survival Handbook
- AFTB – *MyArmyLifeToo.com*
- Army Family Liaison Office – armyfamiliesonline.org
- Family Support Web Portal -- *MyArmyLifeToo.com*
- Virtual Family Readiness Groups – *www.ArmyFRG.org*

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